

This Weekly Newsletter
is brought to you by

Living with Alzheimer's

by Maureen E. Hook, Ph.D.

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Recently, I read a wonderful article in the New York Times written by a 26-year old writer, Janine Grimaldi, who has a grandmother who is in, what I would call, the moderate stage of Alzheimer's. This is my own informal classification system based on my experience of having a mother who is 95 years old and who is in the advanced stages of the disease. Her grandmother still has language and mobility, but she became quite agitated one day. when she did not recognize the house she had lived in for over 50 years in Brooklyn. Her grandmother refused to get off the van from her senior daycare center. No amount of coaxing worked. Relatives were called, but her son was too far away, so the granddaughter and daughter-in-law were the next to be enlisted. Even they did not have success. It was finally decided that the van driver should make his other stops, which were fortunately in the area, and then try again with her. The driver only agreed to this plan if a relative would ride with the grandmother. So the granddaughter did, and she charmed her grandmother by singing old family favorites with her. They are a large Italian family, and there were many instances over the years of singing together favorites of Frank Sinatra or Tony Bennett. Several rounds of "That's Amore" did the trick. By the time the van pulled up to the house again, grandmother was ready to depart and go with her home health aide. (Source = Jeanine Grimaldi, "In Grandmother's Alzheimer's, Another Lesson in Family, New York Times, July 11, 2013)

It is an affectionate portrayal of relationships over the generations. What a wonderful lesson in caring for and being involved with one's relatives. This family had the advantage of proximity, but the message was clear. Family is important, and family will take care of you no matter how impaired

Living with Alzheimer's (con't)

or imperfect you may become.

It also represents a very accurate picture of Alzheimer's. There are good days and bad days as the disease progresses. In my own mother's case, it was as if time were being erased backwards. When my father died, quite early in her disease, it is sad to say, but a 50years+ marriage seemed to disappear. Without his physical presence, that chapter in her life closed. Yet memories of her childhood on a farm in Michigan remained for a while longer . Now those, too have disappeared. Eventually, the ability to use the telephone was lost. Even if someone dialed for her, she could not understand how one could one use an object to talk to a person in another state? Impossible! If the object were not right in front of her, it didn't exist. The stories go on and on. But it was heartwarming to read about another family's experience with the disease.

The final chapter of my life with the disease cannot yet be written. My mother continues to battle Alzheimer's. It has been a slow progression, beginning around age 78. She is now 95. Her form of communication has been reduced to a wink. To show her excitement when we visit, she looks from 1 to the other of her 4 children, and smiles and winks at us. I think she recognizes us. It doesn't really matter. We continue to visit to support her. She took care of us, and now it our turn to take care of her.



What Wagging Tails Mean

Hook Law Center: Kit Kat, what does it mean when a dog wags its tail?

Kit Kat: Wow, you wouldn't believe how much can be communicated by a dog's tail wag! It turns out that a dog's tail wag is really very much like a person's smile. It can communicate happiness, fear, and many other things. Also, specific breeds, depending on their type of tail, can imply different things with their distinctive wag. So don't clip your dog's tail as a puppy, if you want to be able to read his/her moods.

Basic communication for a dog occurs through its tail. So, it will not wag its tail when it is alone. It will only wag it in the presence of another dog, person, or animal. To analyze a wag, one must look at the pattern of movement and position. Does the dog move its tail very rapidly, signaling a heightened sense of excitement, or

at a slower pace which is more indicative of contentment. Position is really loaded with meaning. A middle height signals the dog is relaxed. As the tail moves into a vertical position, it means that the dog is increasingly on alert. A completely vertical position can mean that the dog is issuing a warning to keep one's distance.

Now what was completely new to me is this--if a dog moves its tail to the left of its body (positions are relative to the dog if one were standing behind it), it has a negative connotation. When the tail is moved on the right side of its body, it has a positive connotation. Apparently, this has some relationship to the left brain/right brain research that is true for birds, frogs, monkeys, and humans. The left brain is responsible for controlling the right side of the body and in humans generally reflects emotional states such as happiness. It works the same way for dogs. Movement on the right side of its body communicates positive feelings. On the other hand, the right side of the brain in all these species controls movement on the left side of the body. Movement that results on the left side frequently connotes negative feelings like fear or rejection.

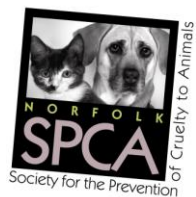
Now you can see why I thought this was such interesting stuff! Once again, dogs have proved their kinship with humans. The article didn't mention cats, but I suspect there are some similarities. If it's true about this left brain/right brain stuff for birds and frogs, it's got to be true for us cats. Stay tuned!

(Source = Stanley Coren, Ph.D., "What a Dog's Tail Wags Really Mean: Some New Scientific Data," [Psychology Today](http://www.psychologytoday.com/em/81409), 6-10-2013 or <http://www.psychologytoday.com/em/81409>)

Special Offer for Subscribers of Hook Law Center News:
This Summer, Bring Home a New Best Friend!

The Norfolk SPCA is offering subscribers of Hook Law Center News a discount on adoptions this summer. As kids get out of school,

it's a perfect time to welcome a new family member into your home! The adoption discount lasts through Labor Day. Bring the whole family and find a wonderful new addition for your home!



Adoption Discount

Bring a copy of this ad at the time of adoption and receive a 20% discount off adoption fees:

- **\$30 off of the regular dog adoption fee of \$150.**
- **\$20 off of the regular cat adoption fee of \$100.**

View all the adoptable pets and check out the hours of operation at www.NorfolkSPCA.org/adopt. The Norfolk SPCA is open seven days a week and has lots of loving, homeless pets in need of new, forever homes. The shelter is located just off I-264 at the Ballentine Blvd. exit. Phone: (757) 622-3319.

Upcoming Events

- Andrew Hook will be part of a panel forum discussing “**Sexuality & Dementia**” presented by Senior Advocate at their August Lunch & Learn Program, **August 15, 2013** at The Talbot on Granby, 6311 Granby Street, Norfolk.
- Hook Law Center will be presenting at the Advanced Elder Law Seminar sponsored by Virginia Continuing Legal Education at The Place at Innsbrook, 4100 Cox Rd., Glen Allen, VA on **September 11, 2013**.
- Hook Law Center will be presenting a seminar on Providing for Pets in Estate Plans at Care-A-Lot Pet Supply, 5457 Indian River Road, Virginia Beach, VA on **September 19, 2013** at **6:30 p.m.** This event, hosted by the Norfolk SPCA and Care-A-Lot Pet Supply, is free and open to the public.
- Hook Law Center will be hosting a shred event at our Virginia Beach office on **September 21, 2013** from **9 a.m. - 12 p.m.**
- Hook Law Center is participating in the Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's on **October 13, 2013** to raise funds and awareness. We know **Team Hook Law Center** can make a difference with your support! It's easy to give online using this link: http://act.alz.org/site/TR/Walk/VA-SoutheasternVirginia?team_id=87329&pg=team&fr_id=3766. If you would like to join **Team Hook Law Center**, raise funds and walk with us, please email **Jennifer Woods-Pagano, CECC**, our team captain, at pagano@hooklawcenter.com for more information.
- Hook Law Center will be presenting on Estate and Long-Term Care Planning at the Medicare Health Fair at the Virginia Beach Convention Center, 1000 19th Street, Virginia Beach, VA on **November 16, 2013**. This event, hosted by Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia, is free and open to the public.

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